



The Benefice of St Mary's Bocking & Panfield Church

Sunday 14th January 2024
The Second Sunday of Epiphany
Staying in Contact



The Very Revd Rod Reid - Incumbent (*usual rest day Monday*)

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or on Facebook, search for 'St Mary's Church, Bocking', or 'Panfield Church'

Forthcoming Services

Hymns

St Mary's, Bocking

Sunday 14th January	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass
Wednesday 17th January	9.30am	Said Mass
Sunday 21st January	8am	Said Mass
	10am	Sung Mass

45 (*omit v4*)

Christ is our Cornerstone

536 (*omit vv 5&6*)

393

Panfield Church

Sunday 14th January	11am	Plough Sunday service
Tuesday 16th January	5pm	Office Hour/Evening Prayer
Sunday 21st January	6pm	BCP Evensong

Gospel Acclamation

*Blessings on the one who comes
in the name of the Lord.*

*Peace on earth and glory in the
highest heavens*

NOTICES

Christingle - At the Christingle service on Christmas Eve the collection taken goes to support The Children's Society. So far, £473 has been raised which is brilliant! Any remaining donations or donation boxes need to be back by Sunday January 14th. Thank you.

Save the Date! - On Friday February 9th at 7pm in The Retreat, there will a parish meal, you are warmly invited to join us. More details on the set menu and cost will be available next week. Please speak to Graham Shaw for more details and to book your place.

Choral Evensong - On Sunday February 4th at 5pm there will be Choral Evensong at St Mary's, Bocking, led by the Senior Chapel Choir of Felsted School. All are welcome.

Sunday Coffee - Charity of the Month - Throughout January, the monies donated at tea and coffee following the main service at St Mary's will be going towards 'The Dean Rogers Million Penny Fund'.

Fellowship - The first meeting of 2024 is **THIS THURSDAY** 12.30pm in the Church Hall. Our speaker this month is Sharon Gould, and her talk is entitled 'East End to Essex'.

Stepping Stones - Our next sessions of Stepping Stones will run in Lent, beginning on February 20th at 7pm. The remaining sessions will be February 27th, March 5th, March 19th and March 26th. More details will follow in a few weeks time, but we wanted to give you the dates as soon as possible. All welcome.

Friendly Friday Cafe - We are pleased to say that the Friendly Friday Café is back in the Church Hall from 12noon onwards, and now running each Friday up to and including Friday March 22nd.

RSPB Birdwatch - We are looking for volunteers to take part in the RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch (in the Church Yard) on the Sunday 28th January 11:30 -12:30. No promises, but last year we saw the Red Kite in all its glory, whatever happens it will be a real TWEET!

Online Donations - At present, the card reader in St Mary's is out of action, but you are still very welcome to give online. You could do this by scanning the QR code at the end of this Notice Sheet or you'll find it in church, you scan the code using the camera on your phones. On most phones it will then ask you to 'open the link', from there you can give via the website. Some older phone models may need an additional app to scan the QR code. Alternatively you can go straight to the following website <http://givealittle.co/campaigns/8e6670a3-8911-43d2-bcc3-4b29613d6573>

Prayers - We keep in our prayers Barry and Janice Goody, Jean Goodwin, Sue, Roger, Frances, Jo Meech, and Tony & Ann. We remember our care homes Millard House, Larchwood, Fern Lodge, Aspen Grange, Braintree Mews, St Mary's Court and The New Deanery, and the following, whose anniversary of their passing falls this week Beryl Deacon, Ellen Dickerson, Madge Smith, Arthur Baines, Joe Vincent, Elsie King, Victor Scruby, Keith Collins, Margaret Tabor and Patrick Meany.

The Collect for The Second Sunday of Epiphany

Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new:
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,
and in the renewal of our lives
make known your heavenly glory;
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Epistle Reading - Revelation 5:1-10

Then I saw in the right hand of the one seated on the throne a scroll written on the inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?' And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it. And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sing a new song: 'You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.'

Gospel Reading - John 1:43-end

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me.' Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth.' Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.' When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said of him, 'Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!' Nathanael asked him, 'Where did you come to know me?' Jesus answered, 'I

saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you.' Nathanael replied, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' Jesus answered, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' And he said to him, 'Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man.'

Address

Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

What a question to ask? Every time I hear it I am struck by Nathaniel's cynicism. It seems to me a very unfair response, but one that tells us a lot about Nathaniel, and so many others too, as I am sure he wasn't the only one to think like that. This is no doubt part of the reason for its inclusion in this gospel narrative because so many thought like that, so many were/are cynical about Christ.

The difficulty for Nathaniel and the others was they knew Jesus. They knew the boy, the teenager, the carpenter, but they only knew his humanity, not expecting his divinity, so their hopes of the Messiah are that it couldn't, wouldn't be anyone from Nazareth, or they would know. Of all the places for a Messiah to come it wouldn't be Nazareth! Thus of course highlighting their cynicism. So what do we do?

Cynicism is difficult to deal with, can anything good come out of Bocking? Can anything good come out of St Mary's? Or the Church? How would we respond?

We can't pretend there aren't people who may be thinking it. We might disagree wholeheartedly, but we must accept there are many people who don't come to church because they disagree, they think they know what happens here, they think they have God all sussed out. They think they don't need him. There is plenty of cynicism out there.

But we would be even more arrogant to pretend that we aren't cynical too at times, we too can fall into the trap of thinking we have it all sorted, God sussed, that we couldn't possibly like the Nazarenes be missing Christ's very presence. Nathaniel then highlights not just the cynicism of himself, those in Nazareth, but us and the wider community too.

But this is a rich story with more than just one character. How about Philip? A very different man, with a very different response.

We meet him right at the start, as it says, Jesus found Philip. Have you noticed that before? Philip didn't find Christ. Christ found Philip.

The truth is not that you and I have found Christ. but that Christ has found us. We did not decide for God. God decided for us. Amongst all this cynicism, that certainly is re-assuring to hear again.

We can be drawn into cynicism for all sorts of reasons, but so often it is when a crisis comes along, whether that be due to our health, for financial reasons, a relationship, or maybe when we feel alone. Those situations can mean that we feel cut off from God, and maybe cut off from who we really are.

During the week, I was at a study morning and the theme was exile. We of course touched on political and geographical exile, but noted on a number of occasions how many times we find ourselves in a place of exile. The definition offered for exile was 'an experience where we are neither at home or in control'.

It isn't a perfect description, but it is very helpful. We may well be at home, but find we are ill, or a loved one is ill. Maybe for other reasons, we are now no longer in control and feel exiled. I suspect that we have all had a sense of being in exile, not at home, and not in control.

It is so good then to be reminded that we have already all been found by Christ, as Philip is. Once Jesus finds Philip, he issues a single command: "Follow me". Philip is compelled to follow Jesus – and leaves all else behind: his work, his family, his possessions, his ambitions. So what did he do next? Well, he found Nathaniel to tell him about Jesus!

And at first he is met by the cynicism we spoke of earlier. But let's not be too hard on Nathaniel because as I think we have seen, that actually he speaks for us and so many more. Whether it is through exile, apathy, distrust or cynicism, just life itself, or our mood that day, we might not always respond as we should, if we were told by another that they had found Jesus. It takes more than that for Nathaniel to truly believe, as I think it would for most of us. We probably won't act as Philip appears to, he just follows. We and Nathaniel need more, so Philip says 'come and see'. Come and see!" and let God do the rest.

For our God is a wandering God, he doesn't have a home, or stay in one place. But we are nomadic too, following Christ is a journey, when there will be times when we are neither at home or in control. We all need reminding that through this journey we have already been found by Christ. Indeed many don't realise they are even on the journey. For those both of faith in God and not, life will continue to challenge us, moments where we might experience the blind trust of Philip, as well as the cynicism of Nathaniel, along with heartache and sorrow, and much joy and laughter too.

We should be true to ourselves. We are only human, but that doesn't excuse us from trying to live life more fully, see Christ more clearly and follow him more closely. As we journey with our nomadic God, we are not alone, we are loved, let us hold each others' hands as we seek to grow in faith.

How often are you told that you are loved? I won't guess, only you know, and only you know the difference it makes when someone says it. As we travel this journey, knowing we are found, we so often skip over what that might mean, and the comfort it might bring and the freedom too to get it wrong but also to get it right. God has found each one of us, and God loves each one of us, cynic or disciple, or more likely somewhere in between. God loves you... may we keep hold of that assurance as we journey with him and respond to his call to 'Come and See'. Amen.

Post Communion Prayer

God of glory, you nourish us with your Word
who is the bread of life:
fill us with your Holy Spirit
that through us the light of your glory
may shine in all the world.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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make a donation to the church.

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over the QR code and then
click 'open link' *Thank you*

